



**“We were just people who write codes”**

## **The Production of Digital Entrepreneurs in East Asian Migration Regimes**

Work and Social Justice: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Age

Joint conference by LABORIS and the DSI Community WORK, UZH

Dr. Helena Hof, University of Zurich / Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

*Funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research – BMBF, Germany*



# Transnational entrepreneurship in the digital area

---



- Migrant entrepreneurship: ethnic enclaves in the secondary LM (Waldinger 1993; Zhou 2004)
- Digital migrant businesses and differentiated embedding in the host society and LM (Hof 2022)
- Migrant entrepreneurs' subjective social mobility vs. precarity (Izaguirre and Sandoz 2023)
- The normalization and romanticization of IT-related flexible labor practices (Zhang 2023)
- Dissonance: institutionalized startups channels for foreigners and migrants' intentions (Hof 2024)



- Global competition for talents, innovation & foreign startups
- Institutionalization of startup entrepreneurship framed through skilled migration policies
  - What kind of migrant subjectivities are being crafted?



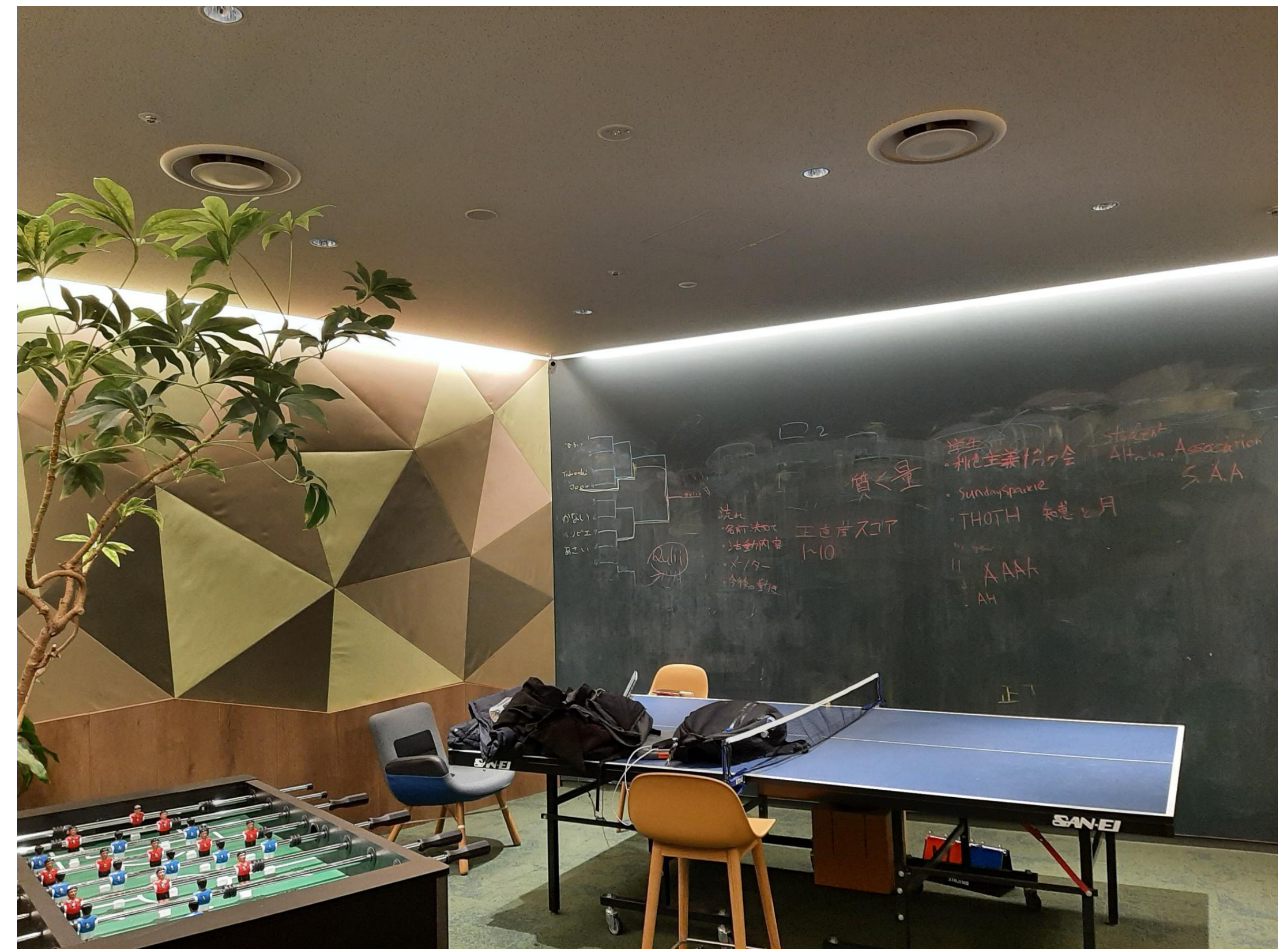
- Field sites: Singapore and Japan as ‘centres of innovation’ and high-wage countries in Asia
- 71 highly-educated foreign entrepreneurs in Singapore and Japan
  - Purposive sampling: multiethnic, multireligious, various nationalities, age 25-55
  - University degree holders, a few previously on traditional expat assignments
  - Various industries, esp. IT & AI, consulting, coaching/human resources
- Semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations
- Online and offline field research
- Access to the field: Entrepreneur associations & networking events, SNS, personal networks





“I didn't have the concept of a job“

- Global incubator and talent investor programs as an access to work overseas
  - Antler
  - Entrepreneur First





# Stay tuned for the final paper!

***Questions? Get in touch***

Dr. Helena Hof,  
[helena.hof@uzh.ch](mailto:helena.hof@uzh.ch)  
[www.quamafa.de](http://www.quamafa.de)

